



Salsabeel Salhab is a 19-year-old volunteer paramedic working with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) in the Bethlehem governorate. Alongside this, she works with her father in the family business. Salsabeel began volunteering when she was just 14 years old, after PMRS teams came to her school and introduced the students to their work. She joined courses in first aid and field paramedic skills. Now, Salsabeel herself introduces students and others to the works of PMRS, to raise awareness and promote community first aid skills.

*“Joining PMRS changed me in many ways. I became a stronger and more confident person, I speak up in discussions and I’m ready to voice my opinions openly.”*

With the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in the West Bank on 7 March, Salsabeel was assigned by PMRS ambulance coordinator in Bethlehem to undertake public awareness raising on hygiene and prevention measures. Neighbours and extended family members urged her not

to go to the field and see persons with COVID-19, fearing that she would bring the disease into the community. Salsabeel was not deterred, though, and with support and encouragement from her parents and siblings, she joined the PMRS teams and has continued her work throughout the outbreak in Palestine.

*“I didn’t care about intimidation by others; and I wasn’t scared going to the field. I continued my work because I knew we were doing something good for people. We received training to protect ourselves during our work, which took away a lot of the fear associated with it. I stopped interacting with friends and family for their safety. I used to go and do my work, and then after returning I would stay in my room the whole time. I quarantined myself.”*

Tackling the COVID-19 outbreak has required huge efforts to promote public awareness. Salsabeel commented, *“Raising awareness is helping to improve understanding, but we still have a long way ahead of us. There is still a lot of harassment towards persons who contract the disease”*. She recalls the discrimination encountered by some of her neighbours who had COVID-19.

Later in the pandemic, with increased numbers of health workers affected by COVID-19, Salsabeel was requested to join the Palestinian Ministry of Health preventative medicine teams to assist in COVID-19 testing centres. Meanwhile, she continued her efforts to raise community awareness about the disease.

Salsabeel believes in the importance of her work, which she carries out to serve her community:

*“The work we do may not have financial payment, but helping someone is rewarding enough, without expecting anything back.”*

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